

Resource Management Spotlight:

2008 Goose Reductions at Summit Lake And Potato Creek State Parks



Resident populations of the Canada goose (*Branta canadensis maxima*) have been reaching proportions that have created serious management issues at Summit Lake and Potato Creek State Parks. Goose waste on beaches, in picnic areas and in bank fishing locations has a negative impact on visitor enjoyment of the park and results in increased operating costs for the property. Eroded shorelines are common as a result of goose grazing. If left unaddressed, the issues involved with these conditions could have adverse long-term effects on the aquatic ecology of Summit Lake and Potato Creek.

The Division of State Parks and Reservoirs is actively managing the problem with two controlled goose reductions starting in December 2008. This effort is intended as a management tool, used to address the issue of local-breeding, resident geese that would not naturally occur in such high densities. With thorough attention to detail, the focus of these reductions is to be as effective and safe as possible for the sake of the natural resources, reduction participants, and visitors of these parks.

Canada Geese and the Challenges They Present

- Like many species of wildlife, populations of the Canada goose have responded favorably to the modern landscape of fragmented forests, vast agricultural areas, and residential holding ponds.
- Large numbers of resident geese have severely grazed grass and low, woody vegetation from surrounding slopes of the lakeshores at both Summit Lake and Potato creek. These denuded or sparsely covered areas are now visibly washing away at rates that far exceed any natural pace. Such erosion and sedimentation threatens water quality and the overall ecology of the lakes at both parks. Another direct potential is the *eutrophication*, or over-fertilizing of the waters from the increase of nitrogen and other chemical nutrients leaching from goose waste near the shore. This results in excessive plant growth and lower available oxygen levels for other aquatic plants and animals.
- Large quantities of goose droppings and feathers in areas are not uncommon. Unfortunately, many of these areas are also family oriented, heavily visited recreation sites such as shelters, concession stands, beaches, and boat docks.



Management History

- Extensive non-lethal management efforts have not been effective. Like many similar areas of the Midwest and eastern U.S., these parks have done a lot in the past to deter geese from finding different areas of the parks favorable. Audible disturbance, including shooting blanks and installing high-decibel distress call producers, has had only a temporary and limited effect.
- Physical disturbance, such as chasing and egg oiling, are very labor intensive and result in limited success. Egg oiling is intended to reduce population growth. Additional deterrent methods have included spraying grass with a commercial non-palatable chemical, and using physical barriers to make access to islands seem less appealing to the birds.

Managing the Issue with Goose Reductions

- The first round of two day reductions will occur at both parks on December 6 and 7. Another round will be held on December 13 and 14. These dates have been specifically chosen to coincide with hunting seasons, state and federal laws and to optimize the effectiveness of the effort given the local flight patterns and behavior of the birds. Shooting hours will be one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Participants can take two birds each.
- The parks will be closed to the general public during the reductions. The designated hunting areas at each park will be divided with one group of up to four individuals within each area. Dogs, boats and temporary blinds will be allowed.
- Participating individuals will be selected using the same drawing method as used for state park deer reductions. However, applications are submitted online only between October 27 and November 9 at www.IndianaOutdoor.in.gov. No paper applications are accepted. One individual will be able to apply for up to three additional “buddies” for the two rounds of reductions. However, regardless of primary or buddy status, ***no individual name can appear more than once in the draw. Intended buddies must be included on the application to participate.*** Successful applicants will be notified online at <http://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/> by November 14, 2008. The main gate will serve as a check station so the property can obtain harvest numbers. Indiana Conservation Officers will be present to ensure compliance of all state and federal laws.
- Additional safety mechanisms will be in place as well. In an effort to reduce less effective shots being taken, individuals will be restricted to carrying no more than 10 shells into the field with them each day. All legal shell lengths with shot sizes ranging from 2's to BBB's will be permitted.



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